

him on being awarded the first prize in the 2007 Van Cliburn International Competition for Outstanding Amateurs. Dr. Mays beat 74 other contestants on June 3, 2007, to earn this mark of distinction. This competition lasts a week, and allows competitors over the age of 35 who do not earn their livelihood through playing or providing instruction on the piano to vie for a chance to win this distinguished title.

Michael Huebner of the Birmingham News once stated that Dr. Mays possessed "a heart and mind of extraordinary capacity." Drew Mays possesses wonderful talent. He polished and sharpened this talent at the School of Music at the University of Alabama, earning both a Bachelor of Music in 1982, *summa cum laude* honors included, and a Master of Music degree in 1987 from this fine institution. In addition, he earned the opportunities to study at the Conservatory of Music in Hanover, Germany, and the Manhattan School of Music in New York City, where he began his Master studies.

Not only has Dr. Mays made a name for himself through medicine and music, he is a man dedicated to family values. He and his wife, Dr. Therese Mays, have four young children. Dr. Mays had his family by his side as he won the Van Cliburn competition this year. I had the pleasure of meeting him and his wife when they came to visit my office during a trip to play at George Washington University through a Smithsonian Associates program. During the recital he gave at the Jack Morton Auditorium on the GWU campus, you could see the bond these two shared as musicians and partners, as his wife nodded along to the twists, turns, and rhythms of his performance.

I commend Dr. Andrew Mays for all of his accomplishments and successes, and I am proud to be able to represent such a wonderful man. I share with this body today my pleasure in congratulating Dr. Mays for winning this prestigious competition, as he is certainly a worthy recipient.●

#### CAPTAIN SETH CHAPPELL

● Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that this letter from CAPT Seth Chappell be read into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Captain Chappell wrote this address for East Anchorage High School's Veterans Day Remembrance Ceremony. He is a 2000 East High graduate and a 2004 Graduate of the U.S. Military Academy. Captain Chappell served with the 37th Engineer Battalion, Combat, Airborne, in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom VII as a route clearance platoon leader a light equipment platoon leader.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

#### EAST HIGH THUNDERBIRDS

When Mrs. Strickland approached me and asked for my thoughts on Veterans Day, I had to take pause for a minute. For me, Vet-

erans Day 2007 will be my first as a veteran back from war, free to enjoy my long four-day weekend, sales, barbecues, and all the other trappings of Veterans Day here in the States. Last year at this time I was in Ghazni, Afghanistan, eight months into my tour as a Route Clearance platoon leader, hunting the roads of Afghanistan for bombs and mines. Since returning in March, I have had time to reflect on what my deployment experience and coming home has meant to me, and how it shapes who I am, what I do, and what I value.

For many Americans Afghanistan is a dimly understood backwater that occupies a place in world affairs somewhere between interest rates and celebrity sightings. For those of us who have served Afghanistan is much more. Afghanistan is days of boredom and seconds of terror. Afghanistan is 120 degrees in the shade and you have to keep your helmet and body armor on. Afghanistan is 10 degrees at night and the heater in your vehicle is broken. Afghanistan is eating combat rations for the 35th day in a row and showering out of a water bottle for a month. Afghanistan is waking up before daylight to roll out and hoping you find the roadside bombs and they don't find you. Afghanistan is the car coming up fast behind your convoy that you hope isn't a suicide bomber. Afghanistan is going to bed at night and hoping that a mortar round doesn't find you, and being so tired that you don't think twice about it. Afghanistan isn't all hardship and torment though. Afghanistan is the sun coming up on the mountains while I drink my coffee. Afghanistan is sitting with the locals and sharing tea. Most of all for me, Afghanistan is the combat engineers of 2nd Platoon, Alpha Company, 37th Engineer Battalion. Having the opportunity to serve with such great Soldiers made all the hardship and trial worth it, and looking back on the experience now, I wouldn't trade a minute of it.

The service members serving overseas today aren't much different than you, and aren't much older, and are doing amazing things. My twenty year old medic almost cut his life short when he ran 200 meters under fire to work on a Soldier with a sucking chest wound who he didn't even know. These are men and women who face extraordinary circumstances and hardship every day, and to see what they endure and achieve is humbling. The job is hard, the risks are high, the pay is low, the clock never stops, and deployments are over when they are over (sometimes in excess of 15 months) and come again all too soon. So why serve again and again and again? Some of our Soldiers and Marines are now on their fourth tour of duty in the Middle East, and still they keep coming back. This morning in the Middle East, Soldiers are strapping on body armor, checking weapons, and readying vehicles to go outside the wire in places like Baghdad, Kandahar, and Mosul. Everyday they give 100% to accomplish their mission with honor and keep each other alive. As an officer, I have to work hard every day to deserve the privilege to lead men and women of this caliber.

We are a nation at war, and a thin red line, less than one half of one percent of Americans, are directly engaged in this conflict. The great majority of Americans can go about their day and think about Iraq or Afghanistan if they choose to, or blow it off completely and watch Laguna Beach on MTV. Whatever your political leanings may be, understand that the men and women of the volunteer military serve on your behalf, and stand on that wall so you don't have to. The profession to which they devote themselves is defined by sacrifice and service to something greater than themselves. You are high school students, with a whole life before you, and how you live it will either honor

that service and sacrifice, or deny it. Graduate, work hard, and do something to help others, something that you can be proud of. Earn the sacrifice that generations of Americans have made to give you this birthright of opportunity.

Lastly, I would ask you to think about how you spend Veterans Day. Tomorrow I will board a plane to West Point, and visit my alma mater for the first time since I graduated in 2004. I'm going back to do some upkeep on the pedestrian bridge that my best friend David Fraser and I built as seniors for a civil engineering project. Dave won't be able to join me however. His name will be read today. Captain David M. Fraser was killed last year in Baghdad on November 26th when a roadside bomb destroyed the vehicle he was riding in. Dave's commander and driver were killed in the attack also. He was supposed to return to the States the next week. Take the time this weekend to thank a veteran. More than 3,000 paratroopers are returning to Anchorage after a hard tour in Iraq. You will see them out and about in town, and when you do, tell them thank you. It means more than you can ever know.

Regards,

SETH L. CHAPPELL,  
Captain, U.S. Army Engineers.●

#### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message from the President of the United States was communicated to the Senate by Mrs. Neiman, one of his secretaries.

#### EXECUTIVE MESSAGE REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate a message from the President of the United States submitting a nomination which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations. (The nomination received today is printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

#### MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 2363. A bill making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes.

#### MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bills were read the first time:

H.R. 3703. An act to amend section 5112(p)(1)(A) of title 31, United States Code, to allow an exception from the \$1 coin dispensing capability requirement for certain vending machines.

H.R. 3997. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide earnings assistance and tax relief to members of the uniformed services, volunteer firefighters, and Peace Corps volunteers, and for other purposes.

#### EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with